

Wednesday, June 13, 2007

Duxbury Clipper

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?*by Bruce Barrett***Seems Like Yesterday**

The Duxbury Art Association turns 90 years old this year. John Singer Sargent, Charles Bittinger, and Frank Benson founded the DAA in 1917. It was a busy year. The United States declared war on Germany, and the royal house of Britain changed their surname to "Windsor," instead of "Saxe-Coburg and Gotha." Germany launched its first major aerial bombardment of London, and announced unrestricted submarine warfare. Czar Nicholas II abdicated, and the Russian Revolution began. The Balfour Declaration in Britain laid the groundwork for generations of conflicts in the Middle East, and T.E. Lawrence led an Arab Army across the desert to capture the Turkish outpost at Aqaba, where the guns faced the sea, not the desert. It was a deuce of a year.

This year the DAA has conceived a commemoration project that joins your talent with the work of their best member artists. In a real sense, you can hang your best effort alongside the classic beauty of Sargent, Bittinger, and Benson. The "art2" project will collect 9-by-9 inch pieces in any medium to be hung in the Lillian and Ture

Bengtz Gallery at the Ellison Center (downstairs; the Bobby Cutler Gallery is upstairs).

Any medium is allowed, as long as the 9-inch square format is maintained. Tiles or wooden squares must be drilled at the top two corners. No matting or stretched canvas, please. You can go to the DAA website at www.duxburyart.org to see samples already submitted. Like any DAA show, remember that the installation will be seen by a community of families, so don't press the edge into adult-only subjects.



John Singer Sargent has long been a favorite of mine, but I spent some time Googling the other two founders. All three are American impressionists. Frank Weston Benson captured light with his brush, and with his fascination for the white dresses of his wife and daughters, boats on the water, and a picket fence that absolutely sparkles. His descendents, Sam and Ned Lawson, live here in Duxbury. Charles Bittinger, like the other two, captured light with élan. His house is here in town, the yellow antique just around the bend on Tremont Street. Bittinger was the official artist for the U.S. Navy at, among other things, the atomic bomb tests at Bikini Atoll. Check www.history.navy.mil to see examples. I don't think my soul is big enough to embrace the contrast, the horror, the power, the shame, and the beauty in the event — but Bittinger's brush could do it.

But don't feel stuck with the style of the founders. The point of the installation is to allow you to express your support and experience in your own way. It can be a photograph, a bas relief tile, a drawing in pen, pencil, charcoal or pastels — or of course, crayon.

The DAA calls the installation ground-breaking. The work will be revealed during the Midsummer Show, debuting at the August 10 Opening Reception, and will hang until Sept. 14. Then it will become part of the DAA's permanent collection. The squares will not be returned.

There is no fee. DAA membership is not required.

"The word we always use around here," said DAA Executive Director Mary Beth Brown, "is 'inclusive.'"

This means any artist, any age. The only expectation is that it be your best effort, a serious attempt (funny or not) to contribute the joy of art in this collaboration.

The deadline is July 16, 2007. Drop off your square at the Ellison Center, Monday — Friday, 9 to 5. Nothing can be accepted after that, because putting it all together will take time, like any family effort.